

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Managing Risk Through Community Engagement

A case comparison of community engagement
processes in Chapel Hill, NC

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The following case study examines the community engagement process used in the redevelopment of two properties in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The case demonstrates that through a successful public participation process a developer can reduce project risk.

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INTRODUCTION

Real estate development is a constant game of balancing risk and reward. Developers are continually seeking innovative ways to mitigate risk, reduce uncertainty and, improve returns. Especially during times of economic hardship where markets are tight, capital scarce, and opportunity limited, the developer must make prudent decisions. While the complete elimination of risk is impossible, greater knowledge about a specific project results in less exposure to expensive risk. To aid in this decision making process, developers have at their disposal a cache of tools including sensitivity analyses, environmental impact studies, forecasting models, expertise from lawyers, accountants, and the like.

One additional risk management tool is the community engagement process. The community engagement process is simply another form of market analysis that all development projects should incorporate into their development budgets and timelines. The process can help development teams identify potential roadblocks, assist in compliance with regulatory requirements, inform strategic planning decisions and ultimately provide better end-results. In addition, the community engagement process can encourage disparate groups to listen to one another, discuss alternatives and help them reach a common solution (Zykofsky, 2008). It can empower individuals, help create coalitions in support of development and ultimately assist in securing the political will necessary to move a project forward. Additionally, while the “community involvement and citizen participation in planning may be more time- and resource-intensive than wholly top-down planning” it does offer significant benefits:

- Ensuring the retention of good plans and policies over time, through the development of a long-lasting and stable constituency.
- Reducing the likelihood of contentious battles over density and land use, which have eclipsed the equally important considerations of context and fit. Proactive planning that incorporates meaningful public involvement increases the likelihood of a project’s success.
- Speeding the development process and helping prevent costs associated with public opposition.

- Increasing the quality of planning, by combining the insights of an informed citizenry with the guidance of professionals.
- Enhancing the relationship between citizens and government. Local and regional governments become more open, responsive and effective, eliciting increased trust and sense of ownership on the part of citizens.

(Local Government Commission, 2010)

The following case study offers a critique and comparison of the community engagement process employed during the conceptual planning phases of the redevelopment of two sites in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The two sites at 123 West Franklin Street and the Glen Lennox neighborhood vary in type and scale of existing use but are similar in that both are highly valued. The degree to which the development teams are able to reduce project risk through community engagement is assessed through an in-depth analysis of multiple factors including the historical condition, existing site constraints, type and number of stakeholders, development process mechanics and the frequency and nature of the public meetings.

From this analysis a number of conclusions are drawn. First understanding the public perception of a place is critical when redeveloping sites that have either historical significance or current relevance. The existing condition of a place matters. If a project is innately controversial the degree to which the public engagement process can change that mindset is limited. In addition, recognizing the community value system that underlies the socio-political climate is equally important. In a society where the rights of the individual are valued over the public interest, a place where for example, individual property rights are held sacred will have a very different political and development climate than in a place with a collective public consciousness and higher levels of civic engagement. In order to mitigate socio-political risks the development team should take considerable care in understanding the public's expectation.

The engagement process itself is also intrinsically valuable. Providing an opportunity for the public to voice concerns and engage in productive discourse may not necessarily result in

consensus but it does enable the team to prepare to answer any questions that may arise during the development process. The timing and frequency of community meetings is also an important factor to consider. Engaging the public early and regularly is preferred to sporadic meetings held late in the design process. Especially in a place like Chapel Hill, public involvement is a critical part of due diligence process. In doing so, a developer can potentially offset some regulatory risk by building a coalition of engaged and informed community members which may reduce the likelihood of costly and contentious conflicts. Ultimately a well-designed public participation process is a relatively inexpensive and advantageous way for a development team to mitigate risks and reduce uncertainty during the development process.

METHODOLOGY

The case study is informed by both primary and secondary research. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in both development projects including: members of the individual development teams, University representatives, Town of Chapel Hill planning staff, community members and outside consultants. The individuals interviewed were selected based on their relative knowledge of and association to the projects. Many of the interviews were conducted on recommendation from other study participants. A complete list of interviewed individuals can be found in the appendix of this paper. In addition, numerous artifacts from the development teams including development schedules, conceptual planning documents, maps and plans enhance the richness of the primary research.

Secondary research sources included market studies, local newspaper articles, academic literature, project-associated websites, press releases, and reports produced by the Town of Chapel Hill and the individual development teams. A complete list of secondary sources can be found in the bibliography.

The remainder of the case is divided into five major sections. The next section details the evolution of the public participation process and the relevant literature therein. Immediately following the literature review is an overview of the history and current climate of the Chapel Hill development environment. An analysis and comparison of the two cases makes up the largest portion of the paper, concluding in a generalized section of results and lessons learned.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As long as people have co-located, urban planning has existed in some form. From the commerce-driven Agora system of early Greek civilizations to the first Harappan cities built on religious symbology, man has thought about the physical landscape and the interplay between people and place (T. Campanella, class notes, September 2008). Until the later part of the 20th Century, much of the decision-making that informed the development of space either happened organically or in the hands of the few and powerful. However, over time, a number of historical events led to the development of the public participation process that underlies a majority of planning practice today.

Two significant movements of the early nineteenth century, namely the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution catalyzed the evolution of modern planning thought and practice. Enlightenment thinkers called for a revolution of independent thought where rationality and science would supersede the pervading religious and royal order (Healey, Collaborative Planning, 1997). The rational theory of planning, based on the tenants of the scientific method, was a direct result of this philosophical switch. In addition, from the “climate of thought, and the marriage of science and individual freedom to industry and commerce” came the period of economic growth and expansion known as the Industrial Revolution (Healey, Collaborative Planning, 1997). Formal economic and physical planning is a direct reaction to the unchecked growth and resulting social and physical ills of the industrialization of both economy and society during this period. Planning

as a formal practice materialized “as the twentieth-century response to the nineteenth-century industrial city” (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003).

Resulting from this ideological shift, figures like Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier emerged and embraced the need for both the social and physical reconstruction of cities albeit with very different aesthetics (Fishman, 1977). Each designer, in his own fashion, attempted to provide answers to the social and urban ills that resulted from the old guard of industrialized cities through a series of utopian visions. Howard’s Garden City was a design intervention that attempted to marry the needs of a workforce population with the benefits of life in the countryside through an idealized cooperative framework (Howard, 1898). Howard’s ideology was a deliberate move to “[supersede] capitalism and [create] a civilization based on cooperation” (Fishman, 1977). The model called for the abandonment of the industrial city of the past to a network of smaller, decentralized town units each formally planned with separate industry, service, housing, and social sectors necessary to satisfy the population (Howard, 1898).

Similarly, “the same hopes that inspired Howard’s cooperative quadrangles” motivated Le Corbusier to create his vision of the ideal city although through a very different design lens (Fishman, 1977). Le Corbusier, in his seminal work, *The Radiant City*, created a society centered on complexes of large apartment towers called “Unités” (Fishman, 1977). Within the unités there would be no class or economic distinction and all citizens would have equal access to the same services and amenities. Through these two designs of the ideal society we begin to see the separation of functions, land uses, and the roots of Euclidian planning (Klosterman, 1985). In addition, both designers and resulting plans shared a fundamental notion of centrality. While cooperation and equality were the end result, it would only be through the application of the individual designer’s vision that these goals could be met. These plans were conceived of by experts in a vacuum “detached from all social pressure” and public input (Fishman, 1977). In

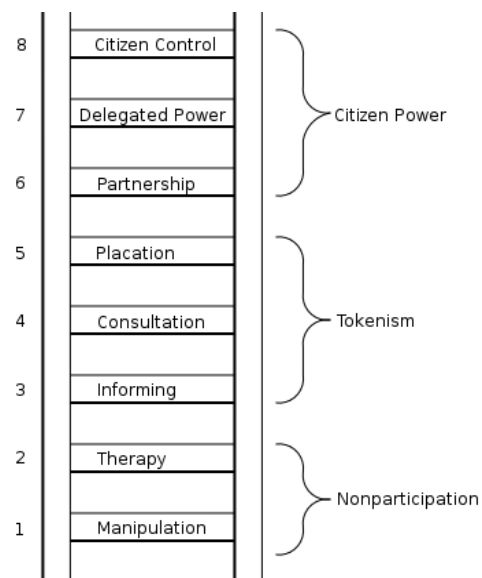
addition Le Corbusier, more so than Howard, recognized that only through the “rational mastery of the industrial process” could man achieve a society of equity and cooperation (Fishman, 1977). This notion of centralized planning, through rational processes, permeated and guided much of planning practice through the early and mid twentieth century.

After the Second World War the notion of centralized government and power became increasingly unpopular. As cities started intense programs of urban renewal, most notably in New York City under Robert Moses, advocates and activists organized to challenge what was increasingly considered to be a gross abuse of power. The work of planning theorist Charles Lindblom in the 1959 article, “The Science of Muddling Through” criticized the idea of central planning as a process, “that required a level of data and analytical complexity that was beyond the grasp and ability of planners” (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003). Lindblom introduced the idea of incrementalism to the planning discourse (Lindblom, 1959). He argued that planners should focus on realistic short-term goals instead of long-range, master planning initiatives (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003).

During this same time advocacy and equity planners namely Paul Davidoff and Norman Krumholz emerged on the scene and posited that planners for too long had focused on the “fundamental notion of a single, common public interest” and in doing so had contributed to the creation of marginalized populations and “socio-economic disparity” in society (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003). Davidoff called for practice that would welcome an open and public

debate on political and social values in order to “rectify racial and other social injustices” (Davidoff,

Figure One: Arnstein's A Ladder of Citizen Participation
Source: Sherry Arnstein, A Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)



1965). Similarly, Sherry Arnstein, in her decisive work, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, built on the ideals of advocacy and equity planning and called for a “redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (Arnstein, 1969). Arnsteins’ *Ladder of Citizen Participation* claims that only through true citizen participation, when the citizenry has supreme control, can the public interest be fully met (Arnstein, 1969). Through the work and writings of these mid twentieth century theorists the public interest now had a voice and footing in both planning discipline and practice.

Building off the momentum of the social and equity planners a new generation of theorists emerged and recognized the importance of opening up the dialogue of planning in the public realm. These individuals repositioned the importance of planning as a process as much as a means to an end and focused attention on the importance of understanding and engaging the public in planning discourse. The comprehensive rational model that pervaded planning thought and practice for much of the century was now abandoned for a more inclusive, communicative and transactive process, “the engineering model of planning that served us during this period, with its penchant for advance decision making and blueprinting and its claims of superiority to other forms of decision making because of its scientific character, are thus no longer valid and must be abandoned”(Friedman, 1993). Many of the ideas during this period were inspired by the German sociologist, Jurgen Habermas who was “deeply committed to reconstructing a public realm which more fully reflects the range of our ways of knowing and reasoning than the narrow diminished world of instrumental rationality and the dominant interest of economic and bureaucratic power” (Healey, *The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory*, 1996). Habermas believed that since, “our ideas about ourselves, our interests, and our values are socially constructed through our communication with others.... Could we not harness these capacities to the talk of discussion in the public realm about issues which collectively concerns us?” (Healey, *The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory*, 1996) The communicative model of planning thus evolved as a participatory

response to both the limited scope of rational planning and the representative models of advocacy and equity planning.

Communicative planning “emphasizes how people construct planning programs and priorities through discussion, debate and inclusionary argumentation” (Healey, Collaborative Planning, 1997). Only through open lines of communication and “face-to-face transactions between planner and the affected population that basis in knowledge adequate to the problem can be found” (Friedman, 1993). Much of today’s practice is based in this communicative model of planning that “envision[s] planners as the facilitators of community self-definition” (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003). It also helps address challenges resulting from the complexity of defining community:

The first is spatially based, all those in a place who share a concern and/or are affected by what happens there. The second is stake based, that is, all those who directly or indirectly, have an interest in or care about what the people in the first community are doing in a place. These may be those who value the historic assets, or environmental qualities of a place, or who go there to shop; or they may be those affected by the adverse consequences of what a community in the first sense gets up to.

(Healey, 1996)

Communicative planning engages the community, provides an arena for public participation and emphasizes the importance of social discourse as a means to reduce uncertainty and build consensus. The following case study examines the community engagement process in the redevelopment of two sites in Chapel Hill, NC.

BACKGROUND

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, located on the western edge of the Research Triangle, is best known as the home of the University of North Carolina. Over the course of its long and storied history, the university and town have ebbed and flowed as one through wartimes, periods of economic prosperity, and deafening recessions. The development of the two projects in examination here is best understood through the greater historical context of the growth in both the town and gown.

The construction of Old East, the first building on campus, in 1793 not only marks the birth of the University but also that of the town of Chapel Hill. (Little, 2006). From that first laid cornerstone, the Town of Chapel Hill's development and growth has been linked to that of the University. Deliberately planned as a University within a quiet village setting "far from vice" the original town plan called for:

The University 'ornament ground' of 98 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres, bisected by two avenues, Point Prospect Avenue (present Cameron Avenue) running east, and Grand Avenue running north toward town, which existed only on paper and was never built. The town contained twenty-four two-acre lots and six four-acre lots, arranged along both sides of an east-west avenue called Franklin Street. (Little, 2006)

As the University grew in enrollment, prominence and size, the town of Chapel Hill prospered (Little, 2006). By the late 1860s "there were eight or ten stores, four churches, two drugstores, six schools, and a population of one thousand" (Spencer) and (Little, 2006).

The onset of the Civil War drained Chapel Hill and the University of its population, wealth and resources. The University did remain open during the conflict (only one of two Southern colleges to do so) but soon thereafter was closed and reorganized a number of times before finally reopening its doors permanently in 1875 (Little, 2006). Like many southern communities after the

Civil War the University and town went through a period of gradual reconstruction. The completion of a new spur of the North Carolina Railroad in 1869, “located one-mile west of the University” reinvigorated the area and marked the establishment of neighboring Carrboro (Little, 2006). Students, faculty, residents and services once again returned to Chapel Hill in droves.

In the early twentieth century, energized by a return to growth and prosperity, the University commissioned a master plan to manage the significant amount of development required to house and educate the increasingly large student population. The planning efforts resulted in, most significantly, the area in and around Polk Place (1920s) and the Louis Round Wilson Library (1929). During this same period, the town of Chapel Hill began to fill out quickly with residences, supporting services, churches, and the like. Landmarks such as the Carolina Inn (1924), University Baptist Church (1923) and numerous fraternity houses and grand homes were constructed during this period. In addition, West Franklin Street continued to establish itself as the commercial polar to East Franklin’s residential concentration.

Following the Second World War, “a group of prominent citizens” concerned with the unbridled growth and changing character of Chapel Hill “made a concerted effort to ‘Williamsburg’ Chapel Hill’s business district” (Little, 2006). The result is much of what we see on West Franklin Street today, a “theme of Colonial design characterized by red brick construction with gabled roofs and white wooden trim,” a harking back to Chapel Hill’s founding of a quiet rural village (Little, 2006). It was also during this time that many neighborhoods around the village core were built to accommodate the numerous returning veterans and families including Whitehead Circle, Glendale, Coker Hills, and Glen Lennox (Little, 2006).

Not much later, as waves of modernism flowed out of Raleigh’s newly formed School of Design onto the Triangle area landscape did the University follow suit and build Chase (1965) and Davie Hall (1967), the Hinton James Residence Halls (1962-1967), and various other Le Corbusier-

inspired residence towers. The Ackland Art Museum (1958), numerous modernist homes, and civic buildings were also constructed during this time. It was during this period that the Kenan family purchased the site at 123 West Franklin and began construction on what would come to be North Carolina's first mixed-use project, University Square and Granville Towers (Cousins Properties, 2009).

Through the late 1970s to today the question of how and where to grow plagues both the town and University. Initiatives by the town including the establishment of an urban services boundary, neighborhood conservation districts, and strict development guidelines have created a development climate perceived as one of the toughest places to get projects done in the state (Martin, 2010). Former Mayor Kevin Foy reinforced this notion, "People are on guard for not having Chapel Hill become a generic place. Not everything is open for redevelopment" (Latifi, 2008). Similarly the University, stretching the limits of its physical boundaries, continues to look for ways to creatively answer increasing demands for space while being sensitive to both the needs and opinions of Chapel Hill residents.

CASE COMPARISONS

The lack of available land, high land values, and an ever-increasing demand for space has resulted in an extremely limited and competitive development environment in Chapel Hill. Large-scale development opportunities, like the two presented here, are largely limited to redevelopment projects. The following comparative case studies illustrate how the inclusion of a public engagement process during the conceptual planning phase of a redevelopment project can significantly reduce risk and increase project feasibility.

SITE HISTORY

The history of each site has relevance to the nature and level of public response during the public engagement portion of the conceptual design phase. The 123 West Franklin Street property,

currently the University Square/Granville Towers site, has evolved over time to adapt to the growth and expansion of the town of Chapel Hill and the University. It has been significantly redeveloped a total of four times. The following excerpt from the current redevelopment project Web site details this record.

The 123 West Franklin Street property was residential until 1916, when the town of Chapel Hill purchased the land and house located there to build Chapel Hill High School. Over the years, the high school was joined by an elementary school and a junior high school. In the mid-1960s, a booming time on Franklin Street, a company affiliated with the Kenan family purchased the property and began to build University Square-Granville Towers complex – one of the first intentional mixed use developments in North Carolina with housing, office and retail shopping – in stages over the next decade. The complex, built off the street and with storefront parking, has been home to such Chapel Hill traditions as the Chapel Hill Barber Shop, Fine Feathers, Ken’s Quickie Mart and Time-Out restaurant.

(Cousins Properties, 2009)

Interestingly enough, in the architectural compendium, *The Town Gown Architecture of Chapel Hill*, published by the Preservation Society of Chapel Hill, there is no mention of the 123 West Franklin site. The lack of historical record suggests that there is little to no significance of the existing built form. This notion has been reinforced by the lack of public comment and interest in preserving the existing built form.

This is in stark contrast to the history and development of the Glen Lennox neighborhood which has remained consistent in character since its original development in the early 1950s. Glen Lennox, constructed between 1949 and 1952, by Durham developer William Murihead (who also built most notably, Dorton Arena in Raleigh and Tryon Palace in New Bern) was built in response to a critical housing shortage caused by the influx of students entering UNC on the GI Bill following

World War II (Little, 2006). The development was the first apartment complex built in Chapel Hill and the first neighborhood built outside of the village core (Little, 2006). The project received both local and national recognition, most notably a National Home Builder's Association prize in 1950 (Jacobson, 2008).

Unlike many multifamily developments, Glen Lennox has a single-family character, the "traditional red brick one-story apartment buildings... are arranged in super block housing complexes along a series of slightly curvilinear streets with hardwood trees and sizeable grassy lawns" (Little, 2006). Additionally, contributing to the character of the neighborhood are "common park-like pedestrian areas instead of the provision of parking close to the buildings" a curvilinear street network and a mature tree canopy (Jacobson, 2008). The neighborhood also contains a small commercial component on the southern edge of the site. Originally the shopping center "provided variety of community services like a grocery store, physician, barbershop, pharmacy, post office, and clothing and furniture shops" (Winterberg-Lipp, 2009). While the site has changed ownership over the years, the original character of the place remains intact. Many of those opposed to the redevelopment of Glen Lennox cite the historical significance of the neighborhood and call for it to be protected in perpetuity (Jacobson, 2008).

As detailed in the two cases presented here, the history of the site is an important factor to consider when engaging the public on a proposed redevelopment project. Some sites, like Glen Lennox, are intrinsically more valuable to the public consciousness. Understanding the historical significance of a place should be a key preliminary step during the conceptual design phase of a project.

EXISTING CONDITION

Appreciating the historical significance of a place contributes to the ability to identify potential barriers to the project's success. Surveying the public's perception of existing conditions

is equally as important. Understanding the existing uses and site constraints enables the development team to identify potential risks and roadblocks to redevelopment and can also help inform future design decisions.

The 123 West Franklin Street site currently sponsors three main uses, the Granville Tower student residence halls, and the University Square mix of office and retail space on approximately 12 acres of land. Major tenants on the site include University-occupied office space,

Figure Two: Aerial View of 123 West Franklin Site
Source: Elkus Manfredi Architects



University- owned undergraduate residences, and a variety of local retail establishments. The majority of University related tenants currently pay between \$17.50 and \$22.00 per square foot in rent; the retail occupants pay a slightly higher rate (RCLCO, 2009). The Granville Towers student housing residences occupy a significant portion of the site. The three towers accommodate up to 1300 students; historical occupancy rates hover around 75% (RCLCO, 2009). While the development continues to perform well and throw off substantial cash flow, the project is not performing to its highest and best use (123 West Franklin Street Redevelopment Team, 2009-2010). In addition, the current structures which were built in the 1960s and are starting to show their age (Gallagher, 2009). The physical design of the site is similar to that of a suburban strip mall, a continuous retail façade fronted by ample parking. Approximately fifty feet of parking right of way separates the shopping center from the street which “largely interrupts the flow of Franklin Street” (Gallagher, 2009). The 123 West Franklin Street site presents a 700 foot gap in the Franklin streetscape. The site has fronts West Franklin Street, borders Cameron Avenue and the Cameron/McCauley Historic District to the south, the University Baptist Church and Fraternity Court to the east and a neighborhood of both owner- and renter-occupied units to the west.

Approximately two-thirds of the site is zoned TC-2 along the Franklin Street corridor and the remaining third along Cameron Street is O&I-1.

The Glen Lennox neighborhood sits on approximately 70 acres of land at the intersection of US 15-501 and State Highway 54 less than a mile from the UNC campus. Currently the primary use



Figure Three: Glen Lennox Apartments
Source: Grubb Properties Web site

of the site is residential consisting 440 one, two, and three bedroom apartments. Grubb Properties purchased the site from the Kenan Family in 1986. Since that time they have renovated the interiors of many of the apartments to varying degrees but they are old, and some suffer from leaky roofs, and recurring issues with mold and pests (Bouma,

Mohan, & Pearce, 2009). Rental rates for the one, two and three-bedroom units range from \$660 - \$1100 making it one of Chapel Hill's most affordable apartment communities (Grubb Properties, 2009). As previously mentioned, the character of Glen Lennox is consistent with that of a single family neighborhood. Wide streets, a mature tree canopy and single story units contribute to the pedestrian and family-oriented atmosphere. Oakwood, a traditional single-family neighborhood shares an eastern boundary with Glen Lennox, to the north are the Rainbow Soccer Fields and the Church of the Holy Family; US 15-501 creates the western edge of the site. East 54, a new high density development is located directly south from the site. The Glen Lennox neighborhood is currently zoned R-3, medium density residential, which allows a maximum of seven units per acre (Town of Chapel Hill, 2009).

PROJECT CATALYST

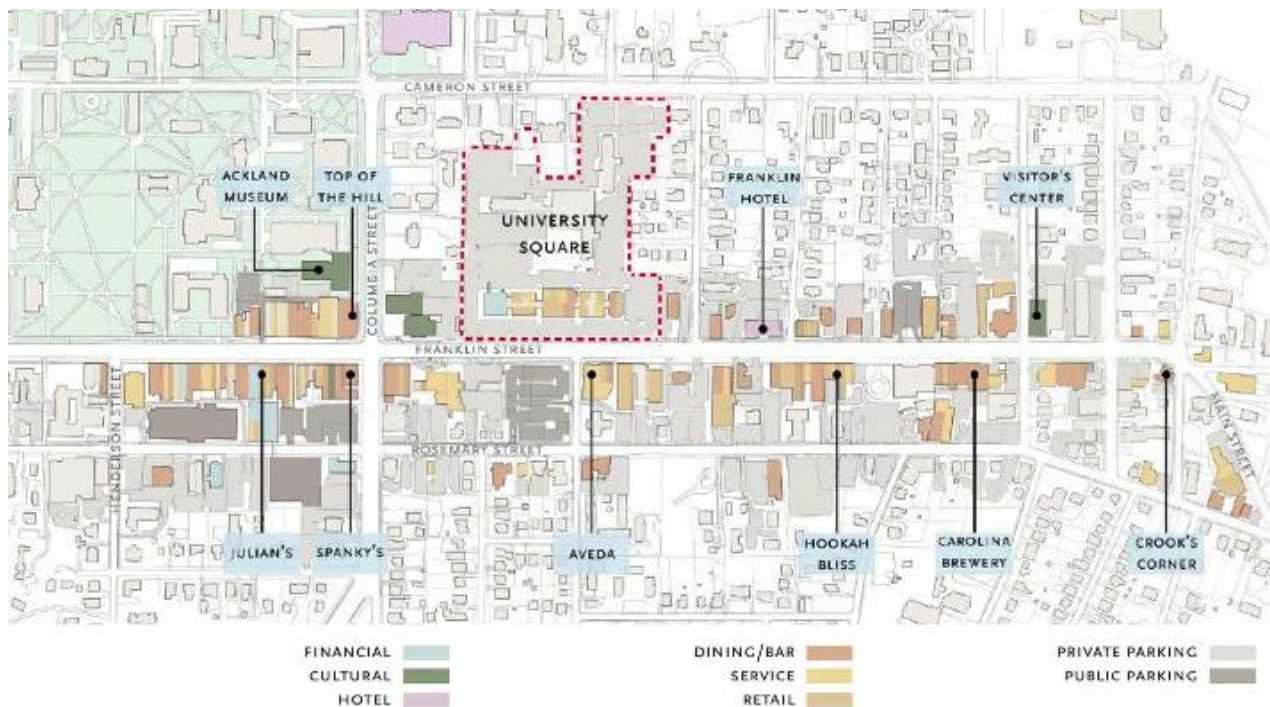
Both projects are well located in Chapel Hill. The 123 West Franklin site occupies a significant portion of Franklin Street, the main social and historical artery through downtown. Glen Lennox

sits as the gateway into town at intersection of two major thoroughfares. From purely an economic and land use perspective, both sites are not performing to their highest and best use. This combined with the physical and functional obsolescence of the built structures makes both sites prime for redevelopment. The following section details the deal mechanics of each redevelopment project.

123 West Franklin Street

In July of 2009 the Chapel Hill Foundation Real Estate Holdings, a non-profit entity of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Foundation (the Foundation), acquired the Granville Towers/University Square site for \$45.75 million from a limited liability corporation affiliated with the Kenan family. The 12-acre site is depicted below.

Figure Four: Contextual Site Diagram, 123 West Franklin Street
Source: Elkus Manfredi Architects



Glen Lennox

In March of 2008, Grubb Properties announced plans to redevelop Glen Lennox into a mixed-use, high density development with office, residential, retail and restaurant space. Citing increasing costs due to high maintenance requirements and an overall assertion that the apartment

community was not the highest and best use of the land, Clay Grubb, President of Grubb Properties signaled that the existing Glen Lennox could not continue in its current form, “We can’t preserve it the way it is...We don’t make investments that don’t appreciate” (Schultz, 2009).

Figure Five: Glen Lennox Site Plan
Source: Grubb Properties



KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The key stakeholders in any development project consist of both internal and external actors. Land owners, developers, designers, current and future users of space and regulatory entities usually make up the core group of the internal actors. External actors include neighbors, the local community, regional participants and the public-at-large. Particularly, in a place like Chapel Hill, with a socio-political climate and a citizenry that is actively involved in community affairs, the participation of the external actors has a significant effect on a project’s feasibility and development timeline. Understanding the role and degree to which stakeholders expect to be included in the redevelopment process is critical to a project’s success.

123 West Franklin Street

To oversee the development process, the Foundation hired Cousins Properties Incorporated of Atlanta, Georgia as the master developer who in turn hired Elkus Manfredi Architects of Boston, Massachusetts as the lead architectural and design firm. Representatives from the University, Gordon Merklein, Executive Director of Real Estate and Anna Wu, University Architect and Director of Facilities Planning, Cousins Properties, John Goff, Senior Vice-President Development and John McColl, Senior Vice President Development, Susan Freyler, ColeJenest and Stone and two principals from Elkus Manfredi, David Manfredi and John Martin, comprise the core development decision-making team. In addition to the core development team the two primary decision making entities are the Real Estate Holdings Steering Committee, made up of representatives from University departments such as legal, student affairs, the Provost's office, facilities, etc., and the Chapel Hill Foundation board comprised primarily of University Trustees. Additional key stakeholders include the existing retail tenants, University housing services, neighboring Franklin Street businesses, residents of the neighboring Cameron-McCauley Historic District, the town of Chapel Hill planning staff and the citizenry of Chapel Hill at large.

Glen Lennox

The development team for Glen Lennox consists primarily of representatives from Grubb Properties including Clay Grubb, President and CEO and Todd Williams, Vice-President Planning and Development. Primary stakeholders in the project include the rental residents of Glen Lennox and retail tenants of the commercial portion of the development. Additional community stakeholders include residents from the Oakwood neighborhood, seniors living at the Carolina House, a senior living facility adjacent to the site, members of the Church of the Holy Family, the town of Chapel Hill planning staff and the citizenry of Chapel Hill at large.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Each project has a unique development timeline influenced by many of the factors previously mentioned. Abstractly, the process can be broken down into three major components, the conceptual planning phase, a period of idea refinement, public review and entitlement, the construction phase and the period of occupancy from certified to stabilized occupancy (Malizia, 2009). For the purpose of this case study, the majority of the inquiry will focus on the conceptual planning phase and specifically the community engagement portion therein. In each case, the development teams took very different approaches to engaging the community the results of which had a significant impact on the individual project development timelines.

Overview of the Development Process in Chapel Hill

As previously mentioned, Chapel Hill is considered one of the more difficult development climates in the state of North Carolina. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the limited amount of developable land, strict growth management regulations, and a citizenry that is actively involved in the development debate. The Town of Chapel Hill Planning department recognizes these constraints and has over the past few years taken steps to alleviate some of the burden felt by developers by streamlining processes, reducing approval times, and centralizing information (Town of Chapel Hill, 2009). The entire process from the first concept plan submittal to entitlement can take up to 24 months, depending on the number and degree of required reviews (G. Merklein, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

123 West Franklin Street

Through a series of working sessions, community events and presentations to both internal and external constituencies the 123 West Franklin development team intend to produce a conceptual master plan to submit to the Town of Chapel Hill to formally initiate the approval and entitlement process in the summer of 2010. The timeline on the following page illustrates the conceptual planning portion of the team's development process. The section highlighted in red is the planned community engagement segment. As noted, the development team intends to host

three separate public meetings. (Specifics of these meetings are discussed later in the case.)

Construction is scheduled to commence in early 2011. Given the scale and complexity of the project construction is phased over time. The final build out of the redevelopment is expected to last until 2023. An overview of the entire development timeline is located in Appendix Three.

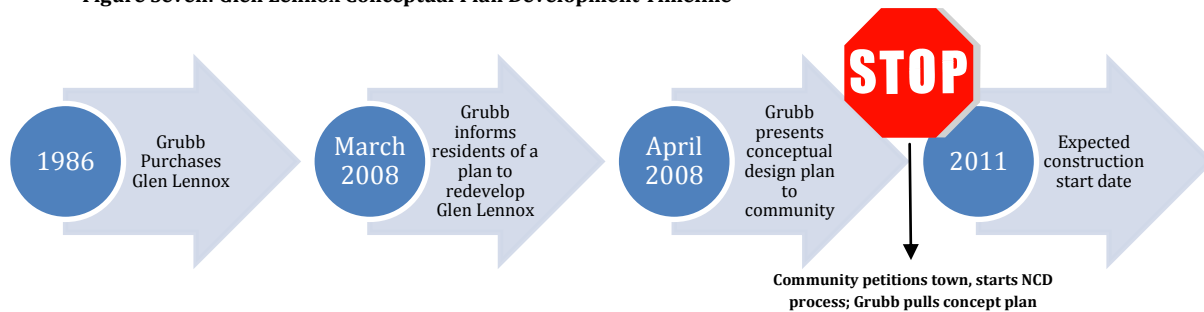
Figure Six: 123 West Franklin Conceptual Plan Development Timeline
Source: Cousins Properties (2009)

123 West Franklin Street Master Plan Meeting Schedule						
As of	9/22/2009					
	Cousins	Core	Steering	Green	Community	REH
9/17/2009			Vision 1			
9/28/2009						
9/29/2009			Vision 2			
9/30/2009		#1-Housing/Plan Community Meeting				
10/14/2009	Late					
10/15/2009		#2-Program & Site Technical Issues			Listen	
10/16/2009				#1		
10/28/2009						
10/29/2009		#3 Transportation				
11/11/2009						
11/12/2009		# 4-Alternates	Alternates			
12/2/2009						Approval Window
12/3/2009		#5 Early pro forma numbers				
12/16/2009						
12/17/2009		# 6	Board Input			
12/18/2009				#2		
1/6/2010						
1/7/2010		# 7			Present 1	
1/20/2010						
1/21/2010		# 8	Town Discuss			
2/3/2010						Approval Window
2/4/2010		# 9 Refinement				
2/17/2010						
2/18/2010		# 10			Present 2	
3/3/2010						
3/4/2010		#11				
3/17/2010						
3/18/2010		#12				
3/24/2010						
3/25/2010		#13				
3/31/2010						
4/1/2010		# 14 Final Material				

Glen Lennox

The Grubb team originally planned to present their conceptual design plan to the Town of Chapel Hill Town Council in April of 2008 and proposed a construction start date of April 2011 (Winterberg-Lipp, 2009). However, due to a number of circumstances detailed later in the case, namely an omission of community input, the Glen Lennox redevelopment timeline has been pushed back.

Figure Seven: Glen Lennox Conceptual Plan Development Timeline



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Especially in a place like Chapel Hill, where the citizenry expects high levels of involvement in the development discussion, the ability of a developer to successfully engage the community in the design process is vital to the project's success.

123 West Franklin Street

From the start, the 123 West Franklin Street development team recognized the importance of engaging the community early and frequently. Once, the development team members were finalized in early September 2009 and the first core development team meeting (held September 30, 2009) focused on planning a community meeting. The team recognized that the extent to which they were able to talk with the public early demonstrated a commitment to true engagement (123 West Franklin Street Development Team, personal communication, September 30, 2009). The first set of community meetings were held on October 15, 2009 at the development team's office located on-site. The main goals of the meetings were to introduce the development team to the public,

explain the background and purpose of the project acquisition and provide an opportunity for the audience to provide initial comments.

The events were open to the public and the team marketed the meetings through multiple channels including print media, e-mail distribution lists, letters to key stakeholders including existing retail tenants, and word of mouth communication. At both sessions, the room was filled beyond capacity. The event was moderated by representatives from the development team and included a formal presentation and question and answer period. The visual displays used by the development team were mainly illustrative of the type and level of experience of the team with mixed-use, university related projects. The visuals reinforced the notion that the meeting was largely about introducing the community to the team and vice-versa.

In order to capture as much feedback from meeting participants as possible the team transcribed public comments and distributed comment cards to all participants. The amount and quality of the feedback was significant. Comments ranged from what type and scale of retailers to include in the new development to concerns regarding traffic and density impacts. According to John Martin, one of the principals representing the architecture firm Elkus Manfredi, the opportunity for a designer to hear what the community really thinks about a project before formal design ideas are formulated is extremely beneficial (J. Martin, personal communication, February 24, 2010). In addition to the formal meetings, the development team also launched a project website in December of 2009. The website provides up to date information on the project's development and includes a section for individuals to provide feedback directly to development team members. To date only one person has submitted a comment through the web (L. Convissor, personal communication, February 4, 2010).

The second set of community meetings are planned for early spring 2010. During these meetings the development team will present concept plans, bubble diagrams, massing studies,

circulation diagrams, etc. to the public for comment (G. Merklein, personal communication, February 8, 2010). The presentation will remain largely conceptual but illustrate the main ideas behind the redevelopment project. Development team members note that the ability to provide the right type and level of detail of information is critical to keeping the public engagement process moving forward (G. Merklein, personal communication, February 8, 2010). Too much detail too soon suggests a plan conceived without public input. Each iteration of public comment is an opportunity for the development team to incorporate community feedback into design specifics. During the third and final meetings the development team will present the final concept designs to the community. A formal comment period will be available to the public during the Town Council meeting when the plans are up for approval.

Community Reaction

For the most part the feedback from the community has been positive with regard to both the engagement process and the redevelopment project itself. Comments from the first meeting suggest the public is appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the early stages of the planning process (Community Member, October 15, 2009). In addition, members of the development team indicate that the lack of public resistance to the redevelopment project is not surprising given the negative public perception of the existing site condition and the lack of historical significance of the buildings. For example, during the first public meeting, Joe Kapowski, a long time Chapel Hill resident and former town council member encouraged the development team to “tear down the towers”. This sentiment was shared by many of those in the room. Given the significance of the site to the Franklin Street condition, the current auto-centric orientation in an overwhelmingly pedestrian zone and the overall physical obsolescence of the structures themselves, public support for redevelopment of the site is expected.

Contributing Factors

In addition to the support garnered for the project through the first round of public meetings there are a few additional factors to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of the public engagement process. Primarily, the fact that the University is a leading partner in the redevelopment of the site carries both positive and negative implications. (Author's Note: While the Foundation is the actual development partner, there is little distinction between the Foundation and the University in public perception.) On the positive side, the University is the largest employer in the area, provides much of the cultural and social amenity in town, and has the patience and capital necessary to see the project through to completion. At the same time long-time residents of Chapel Hill blame the University for quality of life issues including increased traffic, noise, and other student-body related nuisances. However, for the most part the University is viewed as a trusted entity vested in best interests of the town and community.

In addition, given that this is a University affiliated project, much of the internal peer review and sign-off process that required by key stakeholders in the project including the Real Estate Holdings Steering Committee and the Chapel Hill Foundation Board has slowed the project's momentum. However the development team does not view this as a barrier but as an opportunity to engage as many opinions in possible in the redevelopment of the project that will hopefully result in a much better final product (G. Merklein, personal communication, February 8, 2010).

Current Condition

The 123 West Franklin development team is well positioned to continue with the conceptual planning phase of the project. By engaging the public early and regularly they have developed an environment of trust with the community. While there is no illusion that there won't be difficult conversations ahead, especially when people start to feel the day-to-day impacts of construction, the idea is that because of the engagement process the team and community have established the relationship necessary to have an open and productive discourse.

Glen Lennox

In stark contrast to the 123 West Franklin Street example, the public engagement process during the original conceptual design phase of the redevelopment of Glen Lennox was largely absent. The majority of design decisions and planning moves for the Glen Lennox site occurred within a vacuum of public input. In March of 2008 the property managers of the apartment units informed residents of a plan to redevelop the site (Arounnarath, 2008). The following month representatives from Grubb Properties held a meeting at the Church of the Holy Family to introduce residents and neighbors to the potential design concepts, “what was intended to be an introductory meeting was heightened by suspicion and tension” and turned into a public dismissal of the plans (Winterberg-Lipp, 2009). While the Grubb team was preparing final plans to submit to Town Council for review the community in support of preserving Glen Lennox was preparing a petition to the Town of Chapel Hill to initiate the Neighborhood Conservation District process. Realizing that the redevelopment petition would never pass Council and that the community was not only angry but was mobilizing against the plan Clay Grubb, President of Grubb Properties, pulled the concept plan and apologized to the community, “I think our team got carried away and really lost sight of what was here” (Schultz, 2009).

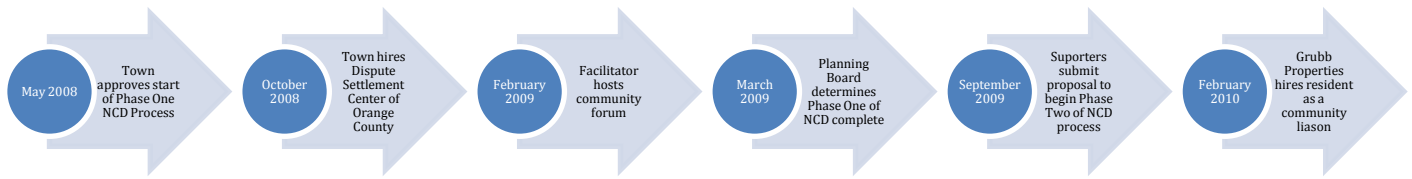
Community Reaction

The Grubb concept plan was met with fierce opposition from the community, “When we saw the first plans, it was ‘This is not us’,” said Glenn Parks, a resident of Glen Lennox in response to a questions from Grubb. He continued with, “You guys weren’t hearing us in the beginning. I think you’re hearing us now” (Schultz, 2009). Beyond providing critical feedback to the development team, the neighborhood organized and petitioned the Town Council to establish a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) for Glen Lennox. NCD designation is a preservation tool designed for community groups to use when their neighborhood is being threatened by change, namely encroaching development. The designation allows the neighborhood to preserve certain

elements that create a sense of place including building massing, setbacks, minimum lot size requirements, etc. Not only can NCD designation regulate the type and character of development within the district boundaries, the process itself is considerably long and time intensive. The two part process consists first of a petition “by property owners representing 51% of the land area within the proposed district; or by 51% of property owners in a proposed district” to town council to host an information session on the purpose and functions of a Neighborhood Conservation District (Town of Chapel Hill, 2009). Phase Two consists of a planning board sponsored NCD feasibility review and recommends to the town the feasibility, impact, and urgency of a NCD on the proposed area.

In May of 2008 the Town Council initiated Phase One of the NCD Process. Recognizing that this particular dispute between the community of Glen Lennox and the Grubb Properties team could potentially become heated the Town Council hired a representative from the Dispute Settlement Center of Orange County to facilitate discussions. This was the first time the town hired an outside consultant to moderate a development dispute. In February of 2009, over 120 individuals attended the community meeting hosted by the facilitator (Winterberg-Lipp, 2009). Tenant advocate groups, neighborhood activists, representatives from the Town and Grubb Properties were all present for discussions. While the debate itself was not without conflict, the forum ultimately resulted in a productive discourse between previously diametrically opposed groups. Stated one long-time homeowner, “It’s a great opportunity for a corporation to show what they can do in harmony with the people of an affected area and an affected town. We think this is doable” (DeConto, 2009). In March of 2009, the planning board determined that Phase One of the NCD process was complete and that the residents could submit petition to start Phase Two. In September of last year, the Town Council approved the Phase Two petition.

Figure Eight: Glen Lennox Neighborhood Conservation District Dispute Timeline



Current Condition

The Glen Lennox NCD process is still underway. However, Grubb Properties insists that “[they] not fighting the conservation district process” (Schultz, 2009). They’ve indicated that there is common ground to answer both the desires of the community with the economic needs of the company, “there’s absolutely a way to preserve a good part of it” (Schultz, 2009). In addition, Grubb Properties continues to have regular meetings with community members on the future of Glen Lennox. They have also recently hired a UNC Department of City and Regional Planning master’s student that lives in the neighborhood as a community engagement facilitator.

RESULTS

Each case represents a significantly different approach to the process and importance of community engagement in development projects. In the case of the 123 West Franklin Street the development team started with the philosophy that a solid community input process should be a consistent theme throughout the entire conceptual design process. This commitment to hearing the community has, at least for the time being, created an atmosphere of trust, inclusion and respect between the development team and the public. Conversely, in the Glen Lennox case the omission of the community from the conceptual design phase of the redevelopment process has certainly extended the development timeline. It has created a climate of distrust, skepticism and tension in the community, which the development group is still working to remedy. Grubb Properties was basically forced back to square one in their redevelopment plans. Without a doubt

there are significant cost implications to a re-start of this nature. As illustrated through these two cases, the inclusion of a public participation process significantly reduces the development team's exposure to certain risks. It mitigates potential community roadblocks and reduces uncertainty regarding public reaction to a project.

The following outline, based on the 123 West Franklin example provides a general framework for a development team to follow when planning an engagement process. Feedback collected from the public informs each subsequent phase.

General Community Engagement Process Framework

Phase One- Establish a Vision: Identify an agreed upon core set of values that define the project. Establish a common set of goals and/or mission statement to enable the development team to present a unified vision of the project to the public.

Phase Two- Introduce Development Team Members: Host first series of community meetings to introduce the public to the development project and development team members. Establish development team credibility with the public by presenting built examples of projects similar in scale and scope to the current project. (Note: Photographs of built projects are more effective than artistic renderings or sketches of proposed projects.) When necessary, identify a local partner to establish and bolster a local community connection.

Phase Three- Present Ideas: Host second series of community meetings to present generalized design ideas to the public. Present diagrams and schematics that share information and conceptual ideas. Consider that specific and detailed site plans may suggest decisions were made without public input and inadvertently create an atmosphere of distrust and criticism. Broad statements of ideas in the form of bubble diagrams and massing studies are more likely to generate informative value-added feedback compared to explicit site plans.

Phase Four- Present Plans: Host third and final series of community meetings. Present final conceptual site plans. Prepare to answer any questions on why certain pieces of feedback were incorporated or left out of the final plan. Reiterate original vision for the project drawing connections from the goal statements to the resulting schematics.

Phase Five- Formal Comment Period: Present conceptual design plans to governing bodies (e.g., planning boards, design commissions, city and town councils). Demonstrate how community feedback influenced final design plans. Preempt criticism by disclosing how feedback from both supporters and critics was handled. Incorporate feedback from the formal public comment period into final designs.

In addition to the simplified process detailed above, the comparative case study presents a number of generalized lessons learned through a community engagement process:

Consider the historical significance- Recognizing the historical significance of a place is critical to understanding any potential barriers to redevelopment. The degree to which the public feels an emotional or historical tie to a place can potentially impact redevelopment feasibility. In the case of Glen Lennox, the public obviously feels connected to the history of the neighborhood; this cannot be said for the 123 West Franklin Street site. A site with less historical significance, all other things held constant, is potentially less risky than a site with a strong connection to a community's past.

Evaluate the existing condition- The degree of functional and physical obsolescence of a site is also critical to consider. While both sites have low vacancy rates the degree to which the public perceives the physical deterioration of the site impacts the practicability of redevelopment. The majority of feedback during the 123 West Franklin Street community meetings suggests that there is little that is aesthetically pleasing about the current built form of the site. In contrast, the quaint cottage-like atmosphere of Glen Lennox is beloved by many.

Understand the political climate- Understanding the public expectation with regard to the level of involvement in development projects is a necessary factor to consider. The process itself should "reflect the community's values and collective political consciousness" (M. Nirdlinger, personal communication, March 2, 2010). In a place like Chapel Hill, North Carolina the public expects and asserts the right to be involved in the development process. The socio-political atmosphere is one that requires an inclusive and open process. Understanding the political risk associated with a project is essential when initiating a development project.

Realize that the process matters- The development team should understand that the community engagement process itself is intrinsically valuable. The process is "not about defeating those opposed to the project, it is about being prepared to answer the questions that come out of the public design process. It prepares you to respond if not answer tough questions (G. Merklein, personal communication, February 8, 2010).

Engage the community early- Beyond the physical dimension of the project, the point at which the community is involved in the redevelopment conversation is critical, "by engaging residents early... we can often get to the root of the problem and overcome impasses that stop good projects from moving forward" (Zykofsky, 2008). The 123 West

Franklin development team engaged the community from the start creating an environment where the public feels that their input will be heard, respected and considered in design decisions. Conversely, the Glen Lennox development team approached the public after formulating a design plan which signaled that public input was “of little benefit to...the outcome” (Henderson, 2003). The examples considered in this case suggest that the appropriate timing of community involvement, which can build a coalition in support of the project, can lead to a reduction of regulatory risk.

Maintain constant contact- The frequency of public meetings is also significant when designing a successful process, “engagement should be ongoing over time to develop meaningful communication and trust” (Nelson, Babon, Berry, & Keath, 2008). A regular, well-planned series of community meetings, similar to the meeting schedule planned in the redevelopment of the 123 West Franklin Street site, is preferable to the limited sessions offered by the Glen Lennox redevelopment team. In addition to frequent, regular community meetings, the development team should follow-up with community members in a timely matter. As illustrated in the Glen Lennox case, failure to provide multiple opportunities for public involvement results in an environment of apathy and distrust amongst community members.

CONCLUSION

In general these findings support conclusions drawn in literature that the public engagement process is a necessary component of a proposed redevelopment strategy, especially in a place where the social-political climate is such that the public expects an inclusionary process. Faga in *Designing Public Consensus: The Civic Theater of Community Participation for Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners and Urban Designers* notes that, “community participation has become a central element in deciding what [is] built” (Faga, 2006). Her case studies of development projects across the United States present similar findings.

The role of the professional engaged in a serious process of public participation does not begin with a meeting, nor end with responses to public demands. It begins with professionals getting to know people in the community prior to any meetings. It is advanced by a few early successes that demonstrate professional wisdom. Prior to devising

recommendations, it will require presentation of an overarching strategy, and then working to ensure that strategy is accepted by all concerned.

(Faga, 2006)

Additionally, Doug Porter's research in *Development in Practice: Paved with Good Intentions* also suggests that beyond the benefits gained through a public process it is the moral and ethical responsibility of professionals to engage in a pluralistic and communicative process (Porter, 1991). These findings suggest that not only is public engagement a social imperative, but it can help offset the risks associated with development in that it provides more information for better decision making, builds a coalition of individuals in support of the project and prepares a development team to answer to public inquiry.

APPENDIX ONE: List of Interview Participants

Rae Buckley, Town of Chapel Hill Housing and Neighborhood Services Senior Planner

Linda Convisor, Director of Local Relations, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

John Goff, Cousins Properties

John Martin, Elkus Manfredi Architects

Gordon Merklein, Executive Director of Real Estate Development, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Town of Chapel Hill Special Projects Coordinator

Jim Norton, Chapel Hill Downtown Business Partnership

Gene Poveromo, Town of Chapel Hill Development Manager

Anna Wu, University Architect and Director Facilities Planning, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

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